

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for distributing electronic media content over a network from a central location, comprising the steps of:
 - a. validating an offer for the distribution of the media content;
 - b. providing the validated offer for the distribution of the media content to a consumer;
 - c. receiving at the central location a request from the consumer to exercise the offer for the media content;
 - d. providing the media content to the consumer;
 - e. receiving at the central location payment information from the consumer indicating at least the amount of compensation for the media content provided; and
 - f. referencing one or more electronic financial terms to determine the allocation of the compensation among parties having a financial interest in the media content and allocating the compensation according to the one or more electronic financial terms.

2. The method as in claim 1, wherein the validating step further comprises the steps of:
 - referencing one or more electronic distribution terms;
 - comparing the offer against the one or more electronic distribution terms; and
 - validating the offer when the offer is consistent with the one or more electronic distribution terms.

1 3. The method as in claim 1, wherein the offer is provided by at least one of a retailer
2 and a distributor, and the offer is provided to the central location.

1 4. The method as in claim 3, wherein the referencing step further comprises allocating
2 to the retailer a predetermined portion of the compensation according to the one or
3 more electronic financial terms.

1 5. The method as in claim 3, wherein the referencing step further comprises allocating
2 to the distributor a predetermined portion of the compensation according to the one
3 or more electronic financial terms.

1 6. The method as in claim 1, wherein the one or more electronic financial terms
2 comprise contractual terms of agreement between a distributor and a retailer.

1 7. The method as in claim 1, wherein the one or more electronic financial terms
2 comprise contractual terms of agreement between a distributor and a retailer with
3 respect to the electronic media content.

1 8. The method as in claim 1, wherein the one or more electronic financial terms
2 comprise contractual terms of agreement between a distributor and a group of
3 retailers.



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1 9. The method as in claim 1, wherein the one or more electronic financial terms
2 comprise contractual terms of agreement between a distributor and a group of
3 retailers with respect to the electronic media content.

1 10. The method as in claim 2, wherein the one or more electronic distribution terms
2 comprise contractual terms of agreement between a distributor and a retailer.

1 11. The method as in claim 2, wherein the one or more electronic distribution terms
2 comprise contractual terms of agreement between a distributor and a retailer with
3 respect to the electronic media content.

1 12. The method as in claim 2, wherein the one or more electronic distribution terms
2 comprise contractual terms of agreement between a distributor and a group of
3 retailers.

1 13. The method as in claim 2, wherein the one or more electronic distribution terms
2 comprise contractual terms of agreement between a distributor and a group of
3 retailers with respect to the electronic media content.

1 14. The method as in claim 2, wherein the one or more electronic distribution terms
2 comprise rules from a distributor for distribution of the electronic media content.

1 15. The method as in claim 2, wherein the one or more electronic distribution terms
2 comprise rules from a distributor for distribution of one or more of a group of
3 electronic media contents.

1 16. The method as in claim 2, wherein the one or more electronic distribution terms
2 comprise suggested rules from a distributor for providing one or more retail offers.

1 17. A method for validating an offer for the distribution of an electronic media content
2 by a distributor and retailer over a network from a central location, comprising the
3 steps of:

4 a. receiving at the central location one or more electronic distribution contracts
5 from the distributor, wherein the one or more electronic distribution contracts govern the
6 distribution of the media content;

7 b. receiving at the central location a candidate offer from the retailer;

8 c. checking the candidate offer against the one or more electronic distribution
9 contracts from the distributor, wherein the checking step further comprises the step of
10 referencing the one or more electronic distribution contracts in a predetermined order
11 indicating the hierarchical relationship between the one or more electronic contracts; and

12 d. sending an indication of validation to the retailer when the candidate offer is
13 determined to be consistent with the one or more electronic contracts.

1 18. The method as in claim 17, further comprising the steps of:

2 receiving at the central location one or more business rules from the
3 distributor that apply to the distribution of the media content;

4 checking the candidate offer against the one or more business rules from the
5 distributor; and

6 sending an indication of validation to the retailer when the candidate offer is
7 determined to be consistent with the one or more business rules.

1 19. A method for settling a transaction in the course of the distribution of an electronic
2 media content from a distributor to a consumer over a network from a central location,
3 comprising the steps of:

4 a. receiving at the central location one or more electronic financial contracts
5 from the distributor, wherein the one or more electronic financial contracts
6 represent the one or more terms for settling a transaction;

7 b. distributing the electronic media content from the central location to the
8 consumer;

9 c. receiving payment information from the consumer indicating at least the
10 receipt of the electronic media content; and

11 d. referencing the one or more electronic financial contracts to determine the
12 portion of compensation to be allocated to the distributor and allocating such
13 portion of the compensation.

1 20. The method as in claim 19, wherein the electronic media content is distributed from
2 the distributor to a consumer via a retailer, the method further comprising the step of
3 referencing the one or more electronic financial contracts to determine the portion of
4 compensation to be allocated to the retailer and allocating such portion of the
5 compensation.

1 21. The method as in claim 20, further comprising the steps of:
2 providing by the retailer to the consumer a retail offer for the electronic media
3 content;
4 receiving at the central location a request from the consumer to exercise the
5 retail offer for the electronic media content; and
6 distributing the electronic media content to the consumer;
7 determining the portion of compensation to be allocated to the retailer; and
8 allocating the portion of compensation to the retailer.

1 22. An apparatus for distributing electronic media content over a network from a central
2 location, comprising:
3 a processor; and
4 a memory in operative connection with the processor for storing processing
5 instructions enabling the processor to:
6 validate an offer for the distribution of the media content;
7 provide the validated offer for the distribution of the media content to a
8 consumer;
9 receive at the central location a request from the consumer to exercise the
10 offer for the media content;
11 provide the media content to the consumer;
12 receive at the central location payment information from the consumer
13 indicating at least the amount of compensation for the media content provided; and
14 reference one or more electronic financial terms to determine the allocation
15 of the compensation among parties having a financial interest in the media content and
16 allocate the compensation according to the one or more electronic financial terms.

1 23. An apparatus for validating an offer for the distribution of an electronic media
2 content by a distributor and retailer over a network from a central location,
3 comprising:

4 a processor; and

5 a memory in operative connection with the processor for storing processing
6 instructions enabling the processor to:

7 receive at the central location one or more electronic distribution contracts
8 from the distributor, wherein the one or more electronic distribution contracts govern the
9 distribution of the media content;

10 receive at the central location a candidate offer from the retailer;

11 check the candidate offer against the one or more electronic distribution
12 contracts from the distributor, wherein the checking step further comprises the step of
13 referencing the one or more electronic distribution contracts in a predetermined order
14 indicating the hierarchical relationship between the one or more electronic contracts; and

15 send an indication of validation to the retailer when the candidate offer is
16 determined to be consistent with the one or more electronic contracts.

1 24. An apparatus for settling a transaction in the course of the distribution of an
2 electronic media content from a distributor to a consumer over a network from a central
3 location, comprising:

4 a processor; and

5 a memory in operative connection with the processor for storing processing
6 instructions enabling the processor to:

7 receive at the central location one or more electronic financial contracts from
8 the distributor, wherein the one or more electronic financial contracts represent the one or
9 more terms for settling a transaction;

10 distribute the electronic media content from the central location to the
11 consumer;

12 receive payment information from the consumer indicating at least the receipt
13 of the electronic media content; and

14 reference the one or more electronic financial contracts to determine the
15 portion of compensation to be allocated to the distributor and allocate such portion of the
16 compensation.

1 25. A computer readable medium encoded with processing instructions for implementing
2 a method for distributing electronic media content over a network from a central location,
3 the method comprising:

4 validating an offer for the distribution of the media content;

5 providing the validated offer for the distribution of the media content to a
6 consumer;

7 receiving at the central location a request from the consumer to exercise the
8 offer for the media content;

9 providing the media content to the consumer;

10 receiving at the central location payment information from the consumer
11 indicating at least the amount of compensation for the media content provided; and

12 referencing one or more electronic financial terms to determine the allocation
13 of the compensation among parties having a financial interest in the media content and
14 allocating the compensation according to the one or more electronic financial terms.

1 26. A computer readable medium encoded with processing instructions for implementing
2 a method for validating an offer for the distribution of an electronic media content
3 by a distributor and retailer over a network from a central location, the method
4 comprising:

5 receiving at the central location one or more electronic distribution contracts
6 from the distributor, wherein the one or more electronic distribution contracts govern the
7 distribution of the media content;

8 receiving at the central location a candidate offer from the retailer;

9 checking the candidate offer against the one or more electronic distribution
10 contracts from the distributor, wherein the checking step further comprises the step of
11 referencing the one or more electronic distribution contracts in a predetermined order
12 indicating the hierarchical relationship between the one or more electronic contracts; and

13 sending an indication of validation to the retailer when the candidate offer is
14 determined to be consistent with the one or more electronic contracts.

1 27. A computer readable medium encoded with processing instructions for implementing
2 a method for settling a transaction in the course of the distribution of an electronic media
3 content from a distributor to a consumer over a network from a central location, the method
4 comprising:

5 receiving at the central location one or more electronic financial contracts
6 from the distributor, wherein the one or more electronic financial contracts represent the one
7 or more terms for settling a transaction;

8 distributing the electronic media content from the central location to the
9 consumer;

10 receiving payment information from the consumer indicating at least the
11 receipt of the electronic media content; and

12 referencing the one or more electronic financial contracts to determine the
13 portion of compensation to be allocated to the distributor and allocating such portion of the
14 compensation.